Introduction to Orthodoxy 5: Salvation

Begin with this thought: "If you die before you die you shall not die when you die." This is an epigram from the Stavrovouni monastery. The level of our attachment to the things of this earth will determine the pain or joy we feel when we depart from it.

A overview of the fall of humanity: Humans were created to live in communion with God. We were also created according to the teaching of the Church as a psychosomatic whole. Death therefore is an abnormal phenomenon, an affront to God's perfect work. In Christ, God counters death so that it is not victorious in the end and the resurrection of Christ proves this. This communion was broken through disobedience when we tried to become gods without God. The effects of our disobedience are:

- Separation or a loss of communion with God. We were expelled from paradise;
- Separation and a loss of communion with our fellow human beings. Recall the murder of Cain;
- Exploitation of the physical world;
- Death;
- The fact that we are born with the propensity, the inclination towards sin. We are, however, not born with sin.

Another way to speak about salvation is to discuss the three stages of being saved. "I have been saved." We are saved from sin and death through baptism; baptism is the tomb. "Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death" (Romans 6.3). This phase is called Justification. The second stage is, "I am being saved." This is our daily journey with Jesus. This phase is called Sanctification. The final stage of salvation is "I will be saved." It is our final glory with Christ, called Glorification or Deification.

How do we work out salvation? On the day you are married, you are pronounced man and wife, but that reality is reconfirmed each day and takes a lifetime of working on. God desires the same type of relationship of love, trust, and commitment. He desires a dialogue of love and obedience, a relationship that involves both His will *and* your will. What the Church and scripture teach us is that

we cannot at any point stop; the work of salvation is never finished. From the saint to the sinner, from the altar boy to the bishop, each one of us must work out our salvation daily. Each day we must take up anew our life of faith, our struggle for salvation. St. Paul said in his letter to the Philippians 2.12, "Therefore, my beloved…work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."

Why fear and trembling? The alternative is gruesome. If we are not working out our salvation then we are working out our damnation. We either have turned ourselves towards the light or we have chosen to walk down the path that leads to darkness.

Read Psalm 1.

- "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper. The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind drives away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish" (Psalm 1.1-6).

Salvation occurs each day. "The great saints of the Church were humble men and women who radiated grace and love. They were not converted just once. Nor did they repent just once. Their life was a daily conversion and constant repentance…Daily they sinned and daily they repented" (page 48). *Daily* Repentance!? This is the first step towards salvation: repentance. "Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3.2, 4.17). Is repentance only for those who have sinned greatly, the murderer, the rapist, and the thief? Emphatically, no. To be able to say this has something to do with how we understand sin. Is sin something we can place value on or scale to? Or is sin merely anything that distorts, or disfigures human beings by separating them from God? Sin is this later thing, it is any act that cuts us off from God; this is the value of the word amartia, to miss the mark.

Therefore in choosing repentance as a way of life, we choose to do the same with our lives that the great saints have done. Repentance, then, is for everyone; it is the gateway to the Kingdom. In the end we must say *that repentance opens us up to our true potential, instead of something that is mournful and sad, a thing that*

points out our weaknesses, repentance reminds us of who and what we can truly be.

Salvation is more about a relationship than it is a direction or a destination. More importantly, salvation is a relationship more than it is a decision we make, or an acceptance of something Christ did. Salvation is something that is dynamic. Salvation is a relationship and intimacy with our Creator. Salvation is something internal; it is not something that "happens" to human beings. Salvation is not something that was simply "done" for man. It is not external to man. You don't "get" saved.

Is salvation about gauging where we are at? When the moon is full, it appears in the night sky as a perfect white sphere. Yet under the eye of a microscope you discover that it is cratered and pocked. On a computer screen, the images and icons that appear on it are easily broken down into pixels. Often we compare ourselves to others and that is both silly and ridiculous. We take our self and compare it to another finite being whereas we should look at ourselves in light of the infinite: in comparison to God. Now, what we compare ourselves to affects our potential. Why shoot for the moon when you could shoot for the stars? If you compare yourselves to the finite that is all you will ever be.

"What must I do to be saved?" This is a profound question. This is the question we should ponder, an inner salvation that produces a changed society. This inner salvation is what will produce an outer salvation. The rule is that changed people produce a changed society. For too long now salvation has been wrongly viewed as something external.
(Show the icons of Christ the Savior and Christ the Judge. Discuss Christ's function as our savior and our judge).

Why are we saved? We are saved for love and for fruit-bearing. What is salvation? It is theosis, participation in the Divine and uncreated energy of God, real communion and union with Christ; a journey of dynamic growth, a journey of potentials that are reached and then surpassed. Salvation is growth; it is a movement from glory to even greater glory.

Here is something to think about:

- "Salvation is Christ overcoming for us our greatest enemy which is at the root of all insecurity, the fear of death. God does not remain aloof in the heavens while men suffer and die. He takes on a body and by His death destroys our

> death so that now death becomes a doorway through which we must all pass to enter the splendor of His glorious presence" (page 51).

Once again, we must examine the idea of death. Is it necessary to our salvation? Must we die? Must *all* of us die? Can death be overcome? The revelation of Jesus Christ tells us that it is *through* death that we are born anew. Death *is* necessary; it becomes a gateway.

For the Orthodox there is a positive spin on how we view salvation. It is not a simple transaction of Christ taking on our sin and paying our sin debt, per se. Orthodoxy tends to view salvation not in terms of whether one is righteous/justified or guilty/condemned, but whether or not one is becoming like God. Remember that salvation is not an external condition but an internal one; it is about being fundamentally changed. For many there is also the belief that salvation is more or less about moral improvement. In people's minds there is the idea that the grace of God is a created intermediary and not the uncreated energies of God. This implies that no direct participation in the life of God is possible. No union with a holy God is possible, since humans cannot be deified by what is created, grace. What is left is simple moral purification, improvement, and maintenance.

Yet, in the Orthodox model, sin is missing the mark; it is a distortion or a disease that needs therapy. Sin has no temporal and eternal debt per se, nor must it be "worked" off. One does not do "penance" in the Orthodox Church, but rather one seeks to be healed of their passions, their imperfections. Thus we use the language that compares the Church to a hospital and views sin in medical terms: sickness and cure.

Good works, then, are part of the overall therapy humans do towards healing their corrupted nature. Good works are also a real participation in the Divine life and so they bring life and restore human beings to the likeness of God. As Fr. Coniaris says, "[salvation] means also the renewing and restoration of God's image in man, the lifting up of fallen humanity through Christ into the very life of God." Christ forgives man and frees him from sin that he may proceed to fulfill this destiny, which is to become like God. Christ came to save us *from* sin *for* participation in the life of God. It boils down to the question of human kind's destiny.

This exalted vision of the Christian life was expressed by St. Peter when he wrote that we are invited "'to become partakers of the Divine Nature (2 Peter 1.4).'" This is only possible when we consider the fact that the grace which we experience from God is nothing short of the uncreated energy of God, this guarantees the

reality of man's deification (The Truth, Clark, page 89). In the end we are saved so that we might live a new life in Christ, something exalted and unique, something unlike our current state. Salvation is thus about our potential and not only our condition.

Once again this is why death is necessary, we are not raised to a new life in Christ that is simply a continuation of this present life, but something new, something greater. Christ participates in death and is resurrected; however He also ascends into the heavens, taking His human body and human nature with Him!

Now for some technical language and theology: first, we are saved by grace. We affirm as Orthodox Christians that we are saved by the grace of God. God's grace is a free gift of God, it is something that can not be earned, it is never deserved, but rather it is something that results from the outpouring of God's great mercy. This is a good thing. We should never hope for a salvation that is dependent upon us. For such a salvation is uncertain at best. Rather a salvation that is rooted in the mercy of God is a salvation that becomes possible to all. Recall the passage from the gospels; what is not possible for man is possible for God. Second, we are saved by grace through faith. Faith is our response to grace; it is our side of the equation. God grants us salvation through His grace and once this is recognized, our faith is our acceptance of this gift. It is our way of saying, "yes" to the gift of God. Faith, "receives what God gives, not as something we deserve, but as a gift of His grace" (page 53).

Good works are the fruit of salvation. Faith, true faith, is shown in the good works one does. We were created for good works. Good works do not result in merit points. "Good works do not produce salvation, but salvation produces good works" (pages 54-55). The work of Christ is such that it changes us first, and this in turn produces in us the desire and the ability to do good works.

What do we know about the second coming, the end? First, we must realize that the Church says very little about the end. However, she is certain of a few things. First, no one knows the time nor the hour of the end. "But of that day and hour no one knows, no even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father" (Mark 13.32). Second, there will be a general falling away of faith before Christ comes (2 Thessalonians 2.3), and third, before Christ's return the Anti-Christ will appear (2 Thessalonians 2.3-4).

- "Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition,

who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (2 Thessalonians 2.3-4).

When Christ does appear we know that He will come again physically to judge the living and the dead. Everyone will be brought forward to be judged based upon their works.

- "Who ‘will render to each one according to his deeds': eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Romans 2.6-10).

In regards to Heaven and Hell, what happens after we die? Think of a soccer tournament; we know whether we have won or lost, but we don't receive our trophy until the banquet. Olympic medals are not handed out immediately after the event. Again, what happens after we die? Our body dies but not our soul. Yet the body will be resurrected so that as a psychosomatic whole we cam experience the joy of the Uncreated Glory of God. The soul does not go to sleep or into limbo, it grows eternally towards God, while feeling satisfied at the same time, a sort of paradox of feeling complete and evolving eternally. There will be a new heaven and a new earth.
What is heaven? It is not just a place but a relationship. What is hell? We are not sent there so much as we choose it. When we meet God, we will either say to Him, thy will be done, or He will say to us, your will be done. **There is a sense that the love of God is the same in heaven as it is in hell.** We experience that love as joy in heaven but as pain in hell.

Prepared by Fr. Evan Armatas

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Introduction to Orthodoxy 7: The Holy Sacraments

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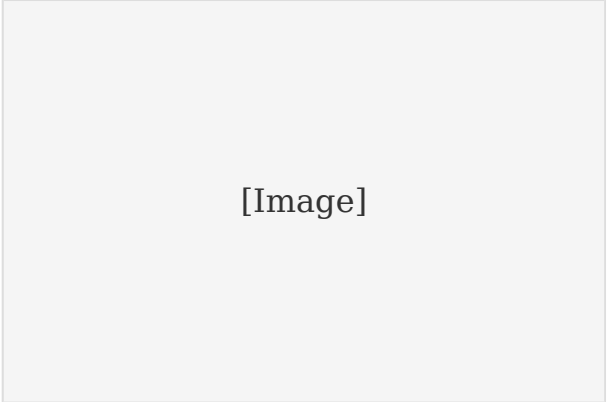

Title: Introduction to Orthodoxy 7: The Holy Sacraments

Subject: Baptism, Chrismation, Eucharist, Confession, Unction, Ordination

Age: 16+ years

Prerequisites: Introduction to Orthodoxy 1 Church Tour, 2 Church History , 3 Jesus Christ, 4 Holy Spirit, 5 Salvation,and 6 Fathers, Saints, and Theotokos

Materials: Handout: Only the Good Go to Church

Worship is an activity that may best describe and best identify what it means to be the Church. The Church best reveals herself in worship. She describes her beliefs in worship and she reveals her nature in worship. It is through worship that the mystery of the Church's union with Christ, her witness to Him and life in Him, and her universal call to relationship with Him is told and explained. Thus worship is par excellence the function of the Church. It follows that our participation in worship provides us with the best means of being **in** the Body of Christ.

Some of the problems many of us face are:

- Our view that worship, to be real, must be relevant;
- That worship is a means towards moral perfection;
- An understanding of worship as something that is done in isolation;
- The pietistic notions that have crept into our sense of worship;
- The danger that worship, everything from the censing of the priest, the veneration of icons, to the singing of the choir, can become for many cultic;
- Rather than being defined by what we say and how we worship, we all too often confine what we do in the Church to a space, to a specific set of movements that we have invested with all manner of symbols and meanings;
- That worship becomes our departure from the world we live in instead of the means through which we see the world transfigured and vivified;
- That our worship loses its focus; it shifts from God to the self. Does it move me, is it relevant to my life? (refer to the handout, Only the Good Go to Church);
- That worship becomes entertainment.

The Church worships through the sacraments. Christ is visible or mystically available and present in the Church through His grace and love. The sacraments are a means by which we come into contact with the Risen Jesus Christ. They keep the mystery of Christ present in our lives. The Church then celebrates and safeguards the Mysteries to and for the faithful members of the Body of Christ.

How many sacraments are there? It is not correct to number them; this is a Western development against the notion that there were only two sacraments (Baptism & Eucharist), when in fact many activities of the Church can be viewed as sacraments. In the East it is more appropriate to speak of *being* in Christ. Through the mysteries of His Church, the ultimate mystery of salvation is made real. Through the mysteries, we find that of the Divine Life is being shared with humanity. Humanity is transformed and so it is redeemed, true life becomes possible, and immortality is accessed through the Holy Mysteries of the Church. The real and life-giving life of Christ is available to all through the sacraments. Heaven is open, and the past and future is experienced today. We should not say "I go to Church" or "I went to Church." Rather, "I enter the Kingdom" through the mystery of Christ's presence in His Body.

Yet there is a "hierarchy" per se to the sacraments:

- Sacraments of initiation include Baptism and Chrismation. Baptism is the putting on Christ (Galatians), participating in the death and resurrection of

Christ (Romans 6), and making possible the Kingdom (Mark 16 and John 3). Chrismation is putting on the Holy Spirit, Pentecost, and Christ's Baptism.
- The sacrament of sacraments is Eucharist; it is the indwelling and ingesting of the Risen Christ.
- Marriage, for salvation, so love can be perfected;
- Unction, for healing of soul and body (James);
- Confession, for healing of soul and body (Matthew 16 and John 20);
- Ordination;
- Tonsuring of a Monastic;
- Consecration of a Church;
- Great Blessing of Waters at Epiphany.

In some sense everything the Church seeks to do in this world is "sacramental." The Church seeks to bring God's life-giving presence to all of creation, filling our world our lives with His presence. In the end, the Church desires through its sacramental life to bring all creation into a new communion with the Risen God. Thus in our own lives, our thoughts and actions can become sacramental. We use matter and symbols. The use of such is first and foremost an affirmation of the Incarnation: Christ took on flesh. The use of matter and symbols is an affirmation that God, through His incarnation and in creation, has sanctified all of creation. Using symbols and matter are visible signs of the One who is invisible. This is a faith that incorporates all five senses: sight, sound, taste, smell and touch. Christ used matter in Baptism, in healing of the blind, at the Last Supper, and in the Parable of the Good Samaritan. In this parable, the sick man is brought to an inn and oil and wine are poured over his wounds. The inn is the Church, the Oil & Wine are the mysteries, and Christ is the Samaritan.

Sacrament is mystery. The word for sacraments is mysterion, and not sacrament. Mysterion, (*mysteries of salvation*) means something hidden that is revealed but never fully understood or revealed; something never exhausted; a thing approached, yet never grasped, never fully comprehended, but always received as a gift. Think of how a priest receives Eucharist & bring to mind the Incarnation of Christ.

The mysteries of the Church are not magic. While they bring the power and presence of God to us, they also seek response from us. Heaven is opened to us, but we must enter, we must be *able* to enter. First we recognize that the mysteries are made active through prayer, through our own, and through the corporate prayer of the Church -- the Body of Christ gathered around us -- and most

importantly through the great prayer of Christ.

Who is the Chief Celebrant of all the Mysteries of the Church? Christ Himself is the Mystical Celebrant. Through humanity's synergistic response to what the Lord has instituted, the mysteries become effective in our lives. Our response becomes one of faith and action; a human life transformed in thanksgiving to the gifts received through God's mysteries; a human who decides to approach Christ with faith, love, fear, obedience, and humility. The mysteries are personal encounters with Christ in faith, love and obedience, but at the same time, the mysteries are never received in an individual manner; there always is a communal nature to them. One does not go to take communion alone, but one does so within a faith community. No sacrament can be performed by the priest alone and no one is damned or saved alone but always within a community.

Baptism and Chrismation

The sacraments of initiation are Baptism and Chrismation. Baptism is the formative means by which one is admitted into the Body of Christ. The primary understanding of Baptism is positive. We are not only asking that our sins be "washed away," for what sins could a newborn have? (See page 194, Meyendorff,

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, start with "If the only meaning..."). We pray for the new birth, a start of a new life in Christ, one that is Spirit-filled and Spirit-led. Just as the natural birth from our mother brought us into a world of sin, the new birth in Christ brings us into the world of the Kingdom, one filled with Christ's presence and the possibility for living in communion with God.

Baptism is described as a gift of God, a restoration of our future potential, "All those who have been baptized in Christ have put on Christ forever more, Alleluia." Baptism is the mysterious participation in Christ's death and resurrection. Like Him, we die to sin, and rise to a new life lived in the Spirit. Read the following passage from Romans.

- "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glofy of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united

> together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves o f sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6.1-11).

Chrismation is our personal Pentecost. It is our decision and confirmation to be Spirit-guided and Spirit-endowed. Just like Christ who rose from the Jordan River to be anointed by the descent and presence of the Holy Spirit, we too rise from the baptismal font to be anointed with Holy Chrism so that our lives will also be marked by the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit. The very word, Christian, implies anointing; *Christos* means "the anointed one".

Eucharist

The sacrament of sacraments is Eucharist. It is the life-giving Body and Blood of our Risen Lord Jesus Christ. It is not mere symbols, not a metaphor, not an analogy, but *the* flesh and *the* blood of our Risen Lord. Hot water is poured into the chalice, thus we recognize a living Lord. Communion is just what the word implies, co-union with God and with the corporate Body of Christ. It is not a union with Christ's essence or nature, but it is a union with Christ's glorified humanity. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread" (1 Corinthians 10.16-17).

Eucharist is always received, and is never venerated or worshiped. It is best understood as a mystery received as food and drink. Eucharist is the central and preeminent means by which Christ dwells with His people. In John 6 and Luke 24, we read that Christ came down from Heaven, emptying Himself to become a man through the Theotokos, and meet each one of us. It is the central worship of the Church as instituted by God.

Is this worship just for those on earth? "‘But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My

Father's kingdom'" (Matthew 26.29). "'Assuredly, I say to you, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God'" (Mark 14.25). Christ's words seem to imply that the Eucharist will be found also in the Kingdom?! Notice that many of the examples of the Kingdom we have in scripture are related to a banquet. Notice also Christ's appearance on the road to Emmaus. Is this to be repeated? This is an archetype: the manna in the wilderness was given daily and spoiled if kept overnight. The words that Christ used in the original Greek indicate a perpetual need to receive and eat; He used the continuous imperative.

It is through the descent and activity of the Holy Spirit that the gifts of bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ. Beyond this, the Church provides no answer. We might as well ask, how does the Lord of the Universe become a human being, a babe cradled within the arms of a loving Mother? Understanding the Mystery of the Eucharist is much like understanding the mystery of the Incarnation. At the same time a proper understanding of the Eucharist is derived from a proper understanding of the Incarnation.

We use common bread, Prosforo, showing the consubstantial nature of Christ. He took on our nature, human flesh, redeemed it, and deified it. This is what we partake in when we eat and drink the heavenly food, the change from bread and wine to body and blood.

- "The [Orthodox do] not see the substance of the bread somehow changed in the Eucharistic mystery into another substance – the Body of Christ – but [we view] this bread as a the 'type' of humanity: our humanity changed into the transfigured humanity of Christ. . .Bread and wine are offered only because the Logos has assumed humanity, and they are being *changed* and deified by the operation of the Spirit because Christ's humanity has been transformed into glory through the cross and Resurrection." (Meyendorff, Byzantine Theology, page 205).

We are not to view the Eucharist as something super-substantial or separate. Through the Eucharist, Christ's **deified** humanity becomes ours. Who should participate in the Holy Eucharist? Only Orthodox Christians in good standing who have humbly prepared themselves. Eucharist is closed to all those who are not Orthodox Christians. **Communion is not the means of reconciliation with the Church but the final sign that it has been accomplished**. Reception of Holy Communion indicates that one has come to agree with the teaching and tradition

of the Orthodox Church. St. Paul himself warns us that participation in the Eucharist in an unworthy manner brings judgment rather than salvation upon a person's soul.

We prepare to receive the Eucharist through self-examination, prayer, reading of scripture, acts of charity, fasting from food and from works of evil and sin. (However, we should never connect fasting with the ability to receive Eucharist. Nothing can truly prepare us to take Christ inside of us. It always remains a gift). We prepare with the fear of God (fear over His departure from our soul), faith (sincere belief that He is Risen and that He has the power to save), and love (the chief virtue, that which activates our soul).

The following are scriptural references of the Eucharist, the Bread of Life:

- "'I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.' The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, 'How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?' Then Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. This is the bread which came down from heaven—not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever.' These things He said in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum" (John 6.51-59).
- "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.' Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins'" (Matthew 26.26-28).
- "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.' Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. And He said to them, 'This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many'" (Mark 14.22-24).

- And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you'" (Luke 22.19-20).
- "Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight" (Luke 24.30-31).
- "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread" (1 Corinthians 10.16-17).
- "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes. Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep" (1 Corinthians 11.23-30),

The Church has a 2000 year witness regarding the synaxis, the assembly of the Church into the Body of Christ and the manifestation of this mystery in the Eucharist. The Church and its worship are ultimately and completely found in the celebration of the Eucharist. In the Eucharist the Church manifests par excellence what she is: The Body of Christ. Therefore worship that is designed to be something other than the Eucharistic assembly is not really the worship of the Church. Can such a worship even be the Church? It is not enough to assemble, to read scripture, or to preach the Gospel. The Church must constantly be the offering of Christ in the Eucharist to the members of the Body.

Confession

Confession is the baptism of tears. The model of confession is one in which the

patient tells their spiritual doctor what ails his or her soul and the good doctor applies the appropriate medicine for healing. Sin is like a splinter. It embeds itself in our souls and it infects the soul, sickening it. The priest seeks to remove it and cleanse the wound. Repentance is an act that can occur both privately and corporately and we must recognize that there are no bounds to God's mercy. He certainly can forgive whomever He chooses whenever He wants. There needs to be true remorse, humility, honest self-examination, and a sincere desire to change with God's help. However, Christ also imparted to His disciples the authority to bind and loose sins. "'And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven'" (Matthew 16.19). And in John, "'If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained'" (John 20.23). Through confession the good doctor, the priest, hears, aids, and witnesses the penitent's confession and through Christ he pronounces absolution.

True penance is not a legal transaction. Sin is not a crime to be sentenced, punished, and forgiven. A sinner is one who is bound to Satan, who is mortally sick. Thus repentance is a release; it is liberation; it is healing rather than judgment (Meyendorff,

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, page 196). It is not deciding guilt, innocence, crime and punishment, yet it is effective only when viewed as liberation from the bondage of sin and a healing therapy. Through the mystery of repentance, we are made well, we are cured.

Marriage

"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh" (Ephesians 5.31).

Recall the Wedding at Cana:

- "On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Now both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, 'They have no wine.' Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come.' His mother said to the servants, 'Whatever He says to you, do it.' Now there were set there six waterpots of stone, according to the manner of purification of the Jews, containing twenty or thirty gallons apiece. Jesus said to them, 'Fill the waterpots with water.'

> And they filled them up to the brim. And He said to them, ‘Draw some out now, and take it to the master of the feast.' And they took it. When the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom. And he said to him, ‘Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the guests have well drunk, then the inferior. You have kept the good wine until now!' This beginning the signs of Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and is disciples believed in Him" (John 2.1-11).

Marriage is the sacrament by which two become one, as God blessed the first union of Adam and Eve; today He still blesses those who come before Him. Marriage is eternal in nature. It is part *as are all sacraments* of the Kingdom and a participation in it. However, the Church always seeks to promote mercy and salvation. Therefore, divorce is allowed not so much as a concession but as recognition that human beings make mistakes and that following repentance, salvation is found again in a new beginning.

Unction

Unction is an anointing of oil. Healing is sought and brought about in the Orthodox Church, *not* as an end in itself. There is no magic here. Healing, however, is seen within the framework of true spiritual salvation and spiritual repentance.

- "But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your ‘Yes' be ‘Yes,' and your ‘No,' ‘No,' lest you fall into judgment. Is anyone among your suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven" (James 5.12-15).

Ordination

- "So Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.' And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained'" (John 20.21-23).
- "Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation,

> full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them. Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 6.3-7).

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